

Designing a Mudroom That Combines Form and Function

Organization, durability and simplicity are key say our experts

BY JENNIFER TZESES

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Colorful cabinetry, playful patterned drapery, and a white built-in bench are key features of this mudroom designed by Charleston, South Carolina architect William Means/Christie's International Real Estate.

Designer's Corner

Each week Mansion Global tackles an interior design topic with an elite group of designers from around the world who work on luxury properties. This week we look at **designing a stylish mudroom**.

A mudroom is the ultimate stomping ground—literally.

In many homes, it's that second entrance space for unloading your shoes, outerwear and gear. "Not only are they a great way to keep outside elements, such as rain, snow, and salt from damaging surfaces in your home, mudrooms are a way to control the chaos of daily life," say Phillip Thomas, founder and principal of Phillip Thomas Inc. in New York City. "It's almost like an exposed closet that reminds you to be organized."

"If you treat your mudroom as a flex space, you spend a lot of time using it—all the more reason to make it spectacular," said Jeffrey Forrest, founder of STACKLAB, a multi-disciplinary design studio based in Toronto.

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Think practically

"Using natural stone materials and concrete finishes, with crushed shells embedded in the floors and walls, creates a more natural atmosphere. A stone ceiling is a durable option to protect the room from water damage. Stone slabs and benches for sitting further the look and create additional storage spaces to fit rolling aluminum pull-out carts underneath.

"Depending on your lifestyle and location, consider adding support hooks for things like paddleboards, life jackets, and helmets—including hooks and brackets connected to the walls and ceilings. Outlets in multiple locations and heights make charging things like motorized bicycles, scooters, and skateboards easier. Additionally, we integrate a shower inside the mudroom with floor drains, designed in a stone finish, to make hosing off sand easy. We also install hooks for clothing and bathing suits for air and drip-drying.

— **Kobi Karp, founder and principal Kobi Karp Architecture and Interior Design in Miami**

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Make it flexible

"I like to think of a mudroom as a creative studio for daily living. The key is to keep the space flexible to accommodate multiple, practical uses. Vary storage modules from the scale of an apothecary drawer to a closet door for added interest and functionality.



This mudroom designed by Jeffrey Forrest features a deep wash sink with room for storage and essential bench-style seating.

Sean McBride

"Essential elements might include perimeter storage, flexible bench seating, a deep wash sink and work surface, a compact washing machine (for items you don't want mixing with your fine linens), overhead hanging natural light, and a floor drain.

"Wire-brushed oak flooring can take a wet boot, as can concrete. Just remember, practical doesn't have to be mundane. For example, if you're going to pour concrete, why not stamp in a herringbone pattern or stain it the Pantone color of the year?"

— **Jeffrey Forrest founder of STACKLAB, a multi-disciplinary design studio based in Toronto**

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Keep an eye on organization

"A mudroom [is] a glorified locker room. Each individual has their own space in which to deposit their personal belongings. To that end, a successful mudroom requires a place to sit, such as a bench, a place to hang jackets, and a place to store shoes. Benches, cubbies and counter space are essential.

"Durability and practicality, however, do not mean sacrificing beauty. I like to use hearty materials that have a worn-in feel, like natural stone, so that you don't have to be concerned about maintenance or water damage. I also love heavy-duty vinyl wall coverings. For millwork, I like to line wood cabinets with sheet metal to protect them from daily wear and tear. I recently finished an entire mudroom where the millwork was made out of Corian rather than wood for complete durability.

"Keep storage as open as possible. It forces people to be organized when they come and go. If you provide enough hooks, shelves, and drawers for each person, there should be no issues with the space looking organized.

"With technology being such a central part of daily life, charging stations are essential and help keep track of these items."

— **Phillip Thomas, founder and principal of Phillip Thomas Inc. in New York City**

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Focus on function

"A family with young children might need lots of low storage so the kids can reach their things, whereas a household with a bunch of dogs might want a space for dog beds and food bowls.

"Locker-style storage is a fun twist on built-in cabinetry for a family with kids. Having a designated space for each member of the family is also a surefire way to keep things organized.



Individual lockers are a playful way to add storage for each family member as demonstrated in this mudroom designed by Christine Markatos Lowe.

Christine Markatos Design

"Depending on where the home is, weatherproofing can be an important factor in choosing surface materials, but avoid things like delicate wallpapers and opt for materials that can handle heavy use, since this is a main artery of the home.

"Stick with a deeper, richer color palette to keep the space looking cleaner longer. Avoid light fabrics for any upholstery, and if possible, use indoor-outdoor fabrics that clean more easily."

— **Christine Markatos Lowe of Christine Markatos Design in Santa Monica, California.**

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Storage, storage, and more storage

"I prefer everything to be out of sight, so floor-to-ceiling cabinets are ideal. The interior can be divided like a locker with low openings for shoes, tall openings for coats, and upper shelves for hats/gloves/bags.

"Consider incorporating a bench into built-in cabinetry to give you the perfect place to put on or take off shoes. Baskets are great for easy storage and can add a pop of texture or color. And, if you have counter space, select a tough material like quartz and add a decorative backsplash.

"Just because this room is multi-functional doesn't mean it can't be beautiful. Painted walls will take a beating, but a commercial-grade vinyl wall covering will last for years. Good lighting is essential, so be sure to incorporate recessed cans along with a flush-mount fixture with multiple bulbs. If you have upper and lower cabinetry, don't forget under-cabinet lighting.

"The flooring material is one of the most important decisions. Many times we'll select a porcelain tile for its durability. Some of our favorites have the look of concrete or wood flooring but are far more resilient."



Elements like marble-like tiling and wood cabinetry elevate this mudroom designed by Donna Mondì.
Ann Summit

— **Donna Mondì, founder and principal, Donna Mondì Interior Design in Chicago**

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Expect wear and tear

“Sustainability is also key. This space gets a lot of wear and tear. Since it’s usually tight and compact, large-scale porcelain tiles can open up the room and are great for easy cleaning. Any custom cabinets should be painted in a high gloss or semi-gloss to avoid chipping and dents. While a rug can soften the space, an outdoor rug is advisable. I also love placing a mirror in the room to create depth and add light to a small space.”



Multi-functionality is key to this mudroom, designed by Melinda L. Headrick, which also houses the home’s washer and dryer.

Pine Acres Realty/Christie’s International Real Estate

— **Melinda L. Headrick, owner & principal designer, Chatham Interiors, Inc. in Chatham, Massachusetts**

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